



---

**RESEARCH PAPER**

## Exploring Taboo Language and Euphemisms in 'Fight Club' (1999): An Analysis of American Cultural Norms through the Lens of Cultural Linguistics

<sup>1</sup>Aizey Haroon\* and Muhammad Farukh Arslan<sup>2</sup>

1. M. Phil Scholar, Department of English, National University of Modern Languages, Faisalabad, Punjab, Pakistan
2. Lecturer, Department of English, National University of Modern Languages, Faisalabad, Punjab, Pakistan

---

\*Corresponding Author    aizeyharoon2k@gmail.com

---

**ABSTRACT**

This study explores the representation of taboo language and euphemisms in David Fincher's "Fight Club" (1999), aiming to understand their reflection of late-1990s American cultural norms and societal disillusionment. Framed within Allan and Burrige's (2006) theoretical perspectives on euphemisms and Timothy Jay's (1992) work on taboo language, a qualitative content analysis of the film's script was conducted. Findings reveal a prevalence of profanity with 46 instances noted, alongside strategic use of euphemisms, notably 20 instances referring to death and killing, and 13 instances related to sexual activity. These linguistic choices underscore countercultural themes, portraying characters' resistance to societal norms. The study highlights the intricate relationship between language, culture, and social dynamics, suggesting further exploration of linguistic choices in media narratives to illuminate broader cultural phenomena, aiding in the understanding of authenticity and rebellion within contemporary society

---

**KEYWORDS**    Countercultural Themes, Cultural Norms, Euphemisms, Taboo Language

---

**Introduction**

David Fincher's 1999 film "Fight Club" has enthralled viewers for decades with its audacious plot and unflinching depiction of social disobedience. The film explores the intricacies of American cultural standards, especially through its use of forbidden language and euphemisms. It is rooted in the countercultural attitude of the late 1990s. This study investigates these linguistic phenomena in the framework of "Fight Club," seeking to understand how they reflect and influence the dynamics of society in this turbulent era.

Three main research issues are the focus of this study, which is based on the framework of cultural linguistics. In order to shed light on the linguistic environment of the movie, it first attempts to identify the categories of taboo terms most frequently and those used least frequently in "Fight Club". Second, it explores the underlying motivations behind the use of particular forbidden words, looking at how these linguistic decisions reflect late 1990s American cultural standards. Finally, the study attempts to unearth the various euphemisms used in the film and the reasons behind their choice in relation to the story and theme of "Fight Club."

In order to accomplish these goals, the study takes a qualitative tack and carefully examines the "Fight Club" script through content analysis. Utilizing theoretical frameworks developed by Allan and Burrige for euphemisms and Timothy Jay for taboo language, the study provides an organized examination of the language used in the movie. By identifying

and classifying taboo terms and euphemisms, the study aims to provide light on their frequency, thematic significance, and underlying cultural connotations. Through analyzing the subtleties of language use in "Fight Club," this research adds to our knowledge of how language choices in late 20th-century America reflect and shape cultural identity and societal norms.

### **Literature Review**

People use language for a variety of reasons, most notably to convey their thoughts and feelings. There is a relationship between language and emotions, and that relationship when specific emotions are communicated vocally, or in other words, by employing a vocabulary (Foolen, 2012). Jay (2009) provides support for this viewpoint, stating that most people will use swearing as a direct way to convey their uncontrollable emotions, such as surprise, delight, rage, or frustration. Swearing is a form of taboo language that speakers employ to convey their feelings (Jay & Janschewitz, 2008). Euphemism is a language bridge to indirectness that speakers utilize when they want to substitute or lessen prohibited terms because it has a positive emotional effect in the hearer's mind (Sadock, 1993).

There has been number of studies exploring taboo language and the use of euphemisms in various literary works such as Sitohang, et al., (2021) examined taboo words and euphemisms in "The Purge: Election Year" using qualitative and quantitative methods. They identified various types of taboo words, with obscenity being most frequent, serving functions such as drawing attention and showing contempt. Vulgarity was least used, primarily by lower-class characters. Functions of taboo words, like drawing attention, were prevalent, while mocking authority was rare. Euphemisms for death/killing were most common, often obscuring literal meanings to evoke fear, while those for addressing were infrequent. Through content and document analysis, this study offers insights into linguistic features in the movie's dialogue, revealing characters' communication strategies and thematic elements.

Similarly, In their investigation of the Albasheer Show, Hassan et al. (2022) examined the use of euphemisms and taboo words for political messaging using qualitative and quantitative methods based on Hai-Long's (2008) rhetorical devices. Through a questionnaire distributed to 100 randomly selected participants and analysis of selected episodes from November 2020 to May 2021, the study found that Albasheer utilized both direct and indirect taboo words, primarily impacting young Iraqi audiences. Despite its effectiveness, the program was considered unsuitable for female viewers due to cultural norms, with sexual words causing discomfort among some viewers. The weighted average importance of using taboo words was relatively low, indicating the program's ability to convey messages without causing embarrassment

Handayani and Krisnawati (2018) analyzed taboo words in the film "Walk of Shame," classifying types and functions using content analysis. They identified six types of taboo words, including cursing, profanity, slang, epithets, vulgarity, and insults, along with functions like attention-seeking and discrediting. Their study highlights how taboo words can change in type, meaning, and function based on context and audience, offering insights into the complexities of taboo language use in media.

Lastly, Nitisari et al. (2023) conducted a descriptive qualitative study to analyze taboo words in scripts from Euphoria Season 2, drawing on theories by Michael Swan (2005) and Timothy Jay (1992). They identified four types of taboo words, including those related to lavatory, private parts of the body, religion, and sexual activity. Additionally, the study revealed several functions of taboo words, such as expressing anger/frustration,

providing descriptive evaluation, joking, expressing surprise, and conveying sarcastic irony or insult, shedding light on the diverse roles of taboo language in the series.

All of the above mentioned researches serve as foundational groundwork for the current study, which explores taboo language and euphemisms in the movie "Fight Club (1999)" as the depiction of American cultural norms. One of the most controversial movies in history is David Fincher's 1999 movie Fight Club. While some criticized it for what they saw as a promotion of sadistic violence and nihilism, many applauded it for its daring graphics and rebellious narrative structure. It is renowned for its frank and thought-provoking discourse, which is frequently filled with taboo and controversial language. The characters regularly indulge in obscene behavior, especially Tyler Durden (Brad Pitt) and the narrator (Edward Norton). Strong language is used throughout the film, including obscenities, gruesome descriptions, and dark comedy. The speech highlights the characters' feelings of despair and frustration as well as the chaotic culture of the underground fight club.

## **Taboo**

According to Radcliffe Brown, the word "taboo" is essentially derived from its original term "tabu," which in Polynesian means "to forbid," with the meaning "forbidden" being extended to include any form of prohibited conduct (Allan & Burridge, 2006). Similarly, Wardaugh (2006) defines "taboo" as any actions that are thought to be against society's norms and are thought to damage its members by making them feel uneasy, ashamed, or embarrassed.

First used by Captain James Cook in 1777, the word "taboo" has a very broad definition, but generally speaking, it means something is forbidden. When something is not allowed to be eaten or used, it is referred to as taboo (Babou, 2014: P. 110). However, according to Hughes (2006), the term "taboo" refers to the proscription against socially inappropriate language, expressions, and subjects, particularly those that are sexual and racial.

As per Le and Le in Fakuade (2013, p. 120), the avoidance of taboo words in a language is peculiar to a culture since the definition of "taboo" varies depending on the cultural perspectives and the linguistic beliefs of the community regarding a certain topic. According to Trudgil (1986, p. 269), the usage of an item in a language that is associated with a certain social value or belief is not always taboo. Rather, it is just a matter of agreement.

## **Types of Taboo (Jay, 1992)**

Taboo words are classified according to the theory proposed by Jay (1992). He gave ten types of Taboo words namely Epithets, Profanity, Blasphemy, Obscenity, Cursing, Taboo, Vulgarity, Slang, Insult and Slur, and Scatology.

### **Epithets**

Jay (1992) asserts that epithets are much more objectionable than other types of cursing because they are brief, strong, emotive linguistic outbursts. The insult is said out of frustration, which could also be interpreted as animosity. Moreover, epithets can also be commonplace, which suggests that someone is hurting themselves unintentionally when they repeatedly utter the same words. The sudden, loud eruptions are "damn", "hell", "shit", "goddamnit", "son of a bitch."

**Profanity**

According to Battistella (2005), profanity is the imprudent use of something that is deemed sacred and is punished by religion with a range of severity, from a mild goddamn to a more severe hell or damn. Moreover, Jay discovered the following: The basis of profanity is a difference in religion. A remark or phrase that is more founded in ignorance or indifference to God, religion, or holy subjects than in an attempt to disparage them would be considered profane. These could be something like, "For the love of Christ, get off the phone!" or "Jesus Christ, I'm hungry!" (Jay, 1992, p.3)

**Blasphemy**

The use of words or deeds that disparage or disregard religious doctrine or holy objects is referred to as blasphemy (Berger & Luckmann, 2016).

**Obscenity**

When a word is classified as obscene, it suggests that its usage should be restricted, that it may have legal repercussions, and that it should not be used freely, according to (Jay, 1992). Furthermore, Battistella (2005) states, obscenity are defined as "words or expressions which characterize sex-differentiating anatomy or sexual and excretory function in a crude way, such as "shit" and "fuck."

**Cursing**

Cursing is the act of expressing strong emotions like rage, frustration, or contempt with the use of derogatory or vulgar language (Ljung, 2010).

**Taboo**

Taboo words are ones that are deemed inappropriate to use in specific social or cultural circumstances. This is usually because they are associated with taboo subjects like sex, body functions, or death (Hughes, 2006).

**Vulgarity**

Carpenter defines vulgar language as crude, unpolished, and off-street statements that are also meant to denigrate or degrade the object or person they are directed towards. Obscene statement that could be taken in some situations as disrespectful, repulsive, and unpleasant is "I have to take a crap" other terms include prick, cunt, dink, dick, (Mercury, 1995).

**Slang**

Slang is an informal language used among particular social groups or subcultures that is defined by unusual words or expressions (Ebble, 1996).

**Insult and Slur**

The language of taboo also includes insults and slurs as a significant element: Slurs and insults are verbal assaults intended only to cause harm to the target of the statement. Slurs can be social, racial, or ethnic in origin, and they might reveal the speaker's bias or stereotyping. A target's physical, mental, or psychic characteristics may be alluded to in insults. Some insults, such "bitch," "son of a bitch," and "jackass," make reference to animals.

Some, including "slut," "bastard," "homo," and "queer," are based on societal outcasts. The most prevalent reasons why children insult others are social (liar, tattler), psychological (stupid, freak), or physical (fatty, four eyes). Rascal and ethnic epithets: dago, honkey, and nigger (Jay, 1992).

### **Scatology**

Scatology is the study of body functions and the language used to describe them, especially excretion excrement, which is forbidden in many cultures (Brenkman, 2023).

### **Euphemisms**

Euphemism is defined as speaking with nice words since it derives from the Greek terms "eu," which means good, and "pheme," which means talk (Enright, 1985). It is "a metaphorical or metonymic use of an expression in place of another expression that is disagreeable or offensive" (Beckman & Callow, 1974: 120). To put it another way, the speaker attempts to turn something disagreeable or delicate into something amusing in order to avoid using terms or phrases that are necessary but awkward to use in public because they may need to be realized in reality (Allen & Corder, 1978; and Sells, 1996).

### **The Types of Euphemisms**

Allan and Burrige (2006) described some types of euphemisms in their book "Forbidden words: Taboo and the censoring of language," which are Euphemism of Profanity, Euphemisms for death and killing, Euphemisms for political correctness, and Euphemisms for addressing people.

### **Euphemisms of Profanity**

In a book published in 2006, Allan & Burrige explained that the name YHVH was written without vowels because it was considered blasphemous to name the god of the Jews and his allies. Instead, it was read aloud as either Ha Shem, which means "The Name," or as Adonai, which means "Lord." This euphemism has persisted into Christianity and is used to refer to and name God and Jesus Christ. Devout Jews refer to Adonai by a euphemism called Adoshem from Ha shem outside of official religious services; extremely devout Jews will write G-d for God, just as Christians formerly wrote Yah, an abbreviation for the first two characters: Heh and Yod (Allan & Burrige, 2006).

### **Euphemisms for death and killing**

Allan and Burrige (2006) state that as discussing someone's death is an unpleasant subject, all terminology pertaining to it should ideally be refined using euphemisms. One of the euphemisms for death that denotes the absence of a live creature's soul is the phrase slumber. Furthermore, it's common to refine the definition of death euphemistically to mean that it's a journey for the deceased's soul to a better place. Some examples of this include part, depart, pass, pass away, pass on, pass over, and arriving at the ultimate resting place and being reunited with loved ones. For example, the word "executions" is a euphemism for any kind of lawful killing, and it comes from the verb "to execute," which literally means "to do perform."

### **Euphemisms for political correctness**

According to Allan & Burrige (2006), use the politeness of not being disrespectful when naming others, and the goal is to remove the stigma of unfavorable societal

preconceptions. Political correctness will undoubtedly garner greater attention than other language censorships as it is applied in political domains and attempts to impose societal change.

### **Euphemisms for addressing people**

Addressing, according to Cruse (2006), is the process of designating the addressee using euphemisms by utilizing particular pronouns that are selected depending on the situation and the relationship between the speaker and the addressee. Furthermore, Warren (1992) states that addressing individuals is done by substituting the refined contextual word—known as the term of—for its broad meaning from the dictionary. Particularization is the process of making general terms contextually specific.

### **Material and Methods**

The research approach used to explore Taboo language and Euphemisms in the movie *Fight Club* 1999 by David Fincher is described in this section.

### **Research Design**

The research design employed in this study involves a qualitative analysis of taboo language and euphemisms in the movie "*Fight Club*" (1999). Utilizing a descriptive approach, the researcher meticulously examined the script of the film to identify and categorize various types of taboo words and euphemisms. Additionally, multiple viewings of the movie were conducted to gain a comprehensive understanding of the linguistic nuances and contextual usage within the narrative.

### **Research Method**

The research method utilized in this study is content analysis, focusing on a thorough examination of the dialogue and narrative structure of "*Fight Club*" (1999). By closely scrutinizing each line of the script, the researcher identified instances of taboo language and euphemisms, categorizing them based on their linguistic characteristics and thematic relevance within the film. Furthermore, the qualitative nature of the analysis allowed for in-depth exploration and interpretation of the data.

### **Theoretical Framework**

The theoretical framework underpinning this research is primarily informed by the work of Timothy Jay (1992) for the identification and classification of taboo words in the movie "*Fight Club*" (1999). Drawing upon Jay's taxonomy, which encompasses ten distinct types of taboo language such as Epithets, Profanity, Blasphemy, Obscenity, Cursing, Taboo, Vulgarity, Slang, Insult and slur, Scatology, the researchers employed a structured approach to analyze and categorize the linguistic elements present in the film. Additionally, for the analysis of euphemisms, Allan and Burrige's classification system (2006) provided a theoretical basis, offering insights into the various types of euphemistic expressions utilized in discourse, the four types explored in this research were 1) Euphemisms for Death and Killing, (2) Euphemism for Political Correctness, (3) Euphemisms for Sexual Activities, and (4) Euphemism for Addressing

### **Sampling**

The data for this study comprised the script of the movie "*Fight Club*" (1999), obtained from an online source. Through a comprehensive examination of each line of

dialogue, the researchers meticulously analyzed instances of taboo language and euphemisms embedded within the film's narrative. Multiple iterations of viewing the movie were conducted to ensure a thorough understanding of the linguistic phenomena present in the screenplay, facilitating a rich and nuanced exploration of the research questions posed.

## Results and Discussions

This section deals with the identification of different types of taboo language present in the movie *Fight Club* 1999 with respect to the ten categorizations given by Jay (1992) such as Epithets, Profanity, Blasphemy, Obscenity, Cursing, Taboo, Vulgarity, Slang, Insult and slur, Scatology and the elaboration of their cultural meaning, this section also explores the types of euphemisms in the movie directed by David Fincher in accordance to the four types explained by Allan and Burrige (2006) which are 1) Euphemisms for Death and Killing, (2) Euphemism for Political Correctness, (3) Euphemisms for Sexual Activities, and (4) Euphemism for Addressing

### Taboo

The table given below provides the frequency of the taboo utterances in the movie *Fight Club* (1999)

**Table 1**  
**The Types of Taboo words in the movie *Fight Club* 1999**

Sr.no	Types of Taboos	Frequencies
1	Profanity	46
2	Obscenity	11
3	Insult and Slurs	26
4	Epithets	10
5	Vulgarity	11
6	Slang	15
7	Taboo	8
8	Blasphemy	4
9	Scatology	4
<b>Total</b>		<b>135</b>

In the 1999 film "*Fight Club*," directed by David Fincher, taboo language is utilized to depict the characters' rebellion against societal norms. Drawing from Jay's (1992) classification, the frequency of taboo words in the movie can be delineated into nine distinct types. Profanity, representing socially offensive language, dominates the dialogue with 46 instances, highlighting the characters' raw and confrontational communication style. Obscenity, with 11 occurrences, further emphasizes the gritty nature of the narrative, while Insults and Slurs, totaling 26 instances, reflect the characters' propensity for verbal aggression and defiance.

Epithets and Vulgarity, accounting for 10 and 11 instances respectively, contribute to the characters' expression of disdain towards societal conventions. Slang, with 15 instances, serves as a tool for rebellion and self-expression, adding depth to the characters' interactions. Additionally, Taboo words and Blasphemy, with 8 and 4 instances respectively, challenge societal taboos head-on, mirroring the film's exploration of controversial themes. Finally, Scatology, featuring 4 instances, injects a layer of crude humor into the narrative, underscoring the characters' rebellious and sometimes juvenile behavior.

The total frequency of 135 taboo words in "Fight Club" mirrors the countercultural themes prevalent in American society during the late 20th century. It shows a rising disenchantment with society norms and a desire to overcome them, even when it comes to language use. The movie portrays the individuals' fight for individual identity and freedom from social conventions while also criticizing materialism and societal conformity through the purposeful use of forbidden terminology.

### Sample texts from the movie "Fight Club (1999)

#### Profanity

According to American cultural norms, profanity is typically defined as using strong words, slurs, or disparaging remarks to express intense feelings, disgust, or annoyance toward other people. Although the degree and context can vary, it is typically seen as improper or disrespectful in polite conversation. Profanity is a reflection of power dynamics, social conventions, and cultural attitudes toward taboo subjects. The individuals' emotional states, interpersonal difficulties, and the themes of deception and disappointment depicted in the narrative are all highlighted by the usage of profanity within the language supplied.

#### Example 1: "Marla, you liar, you big tourist. I need this. Get out."

**Analysis:** In this conversation, Jack accuses Marla of lying and being a "big tourist," speaking to her with annoyance and disdain. Since the word "liar" is an insult to Marla's character and casts doubt on her honesty, its use is blatantly profane. Furthermore, referring to Marla as a "big tourist" is a pejorative word that implies she is shallow or dishonest, similar to someone who simply interacts with situations or environments on the surface. Jack's emotional condition and his contempt for Marla's presence are reflected in his use of profanity, which heightens the intensity in their exchange.

#### Example 2: "Soap -- the yardstick of civilization."

**Analysis:** Tyler Durden is expressing in this chat his nontraditional view of the importance of soap, comparing it to the measure of civilization itself. The phrase "yardstick" suggests that soap is a basic and necessary component of human civilization. The ironic pairing of the culturally charged term "civilization" with something as banal as soap, however, is where the profanity is found in this instance. Tyler questions society norms and ideals by utilizing soap operas as a yardstick for civilization. He also uses profanity to challenge preconceived beliefs about what civilization and societal advancement are all about.

#### Example 3: "Every once in a while ... it's a dildo."

**Analysis:** When describing the procedure for managing luggage that vibrate, the Security Task Force Man mentions that a dildo might occasionally be the source of the vibration. The explicit mention of a sexual device and the casual way it is brought up in a formal environment constitute the profanity in this instance. This profane use is noteworthy since it goes against conventional ideas of propriety and appropriateness, particularly when considering airport security protocols. In more conservative cultural situations, it might be interpreted as unusual or even offensive due to its degree of candor and openness concerning forbidden topics.



## Obscenity

Obscenity is frequently used during tense or intense moments to shock or distress the audience. It gives the conversation a more unfiltered and visceral aspect while highlighting the characters' emotional states and the depth of their experiences. When something is said or done that is deemed obscene or objectionable in American culture and causes discomfort or disapproval from society norms, it is referred to as obscenity.

### Example 1: "You look good. You ... look ... like a pirate."

**Analysis:** In this scene, Jack engages with Chloe, a participant in a support group for people with terminal diseases. Jack compliments Chloe on her appearance as she is dealing with her own health problems. Her response, though, is tinged with dark humor as she compares her appearance to that of a pirate—a character frequently linked to adventure and danger—while acknowledging the seriousness of her illness. The compliment's contrast with Chloe's dire circumstances highlights their shared experience of facing death and lends an ironic touch to the conversation. The conversation's background and the acknowledgement of imminent death add to the scene's impression of obscenity, even though the language itself is not overtly vulgar.

### Example 2: "This is cancer, right?"

**Analysis:** The melancholy tone of the support group meeting is upended by Marla's direct and casual query regarding cancer, stunning the audience as much as the characters. Her carefree approach to such a delicate and serious subject as cancer provokes unease and criticism, defying social conventions about proper conduct in these kinds of situations. Marla's use of strong language draws attention to her confrontational and disrespectful nature, as well as her propensity to flout societal norms. Marla gives the discussion a raw, aggressive quality by employing profanity to address a taboo subject with such carelessness. This unnerves both the audience and the protagonists in the scenario.

### Example 3: "But... I am in a pretty lonely place. No one will have sex with me."

**Analysis:** It's startling and unsettling that Chloe would openly discuss her sexual fantasies in the setting of a support group for terminally ill people. A sense of unease and disgust is evoked by her candid description of her unsatisfied sexual wants and loneliness, which contrasts dramatically with the serious and melancholy tone of the discourse. Intimate wants are expressed by Chloe in a raw and visceral way throughout the dialogue, which highlights the depth of her character and the intensity of her emotional state. Chloe defies social conventions around proper behavior and conversation by tackling forbidden topics like sex and desire in such an open way, which adds to the scene's general air of obscenity.

## Insults and Slurs

**Analysis:** Slurs and insults are used to denigrate or disparage other people, showing the sentiments or contempt that the characters have for one another. These disparaging comments emphasize the antagonistic relationship between the characters and add to the hostile tone of the discussion. It is impolite and disrespectful in American society to use disparaging words to disparage or offend someone because it perpetuates unfavorable stereotypes or diminishes someone based on their alleged flaws or attributes.

### Example 1: "Why? So you can say, 'Oh, that's what you do.' -- And be a smug little shit about it?"

**Analysis:** Using this term, Tyler reproaches Jack for his actions and demeanor, especially his attempts to prove his superiority or impress others. Tyler calls Jack "little shit" and "smug," undermining his self-assurance and implying that his acts are conceited and self-serving.

**Example 2: "His candy-ass wouldn't last a second Wednesday night"**

**Analysis:** The insulting phrase "candy-ass" implies helplessness or frailty. It is utilized as a direct jab at Walter's character by disparaging his alleged lack of toughness or resilience.

**Example 3: "Candy-stripe a cancer ward. It's not my problem."**

**Analysis:** In this brief encounter, Jack tries to confront Marla or show his authority, but she brushes it off by calling his actions insignificant or petty. "Candy-stripe a cancer ward" conjures up a picture of someone making meaningless or flimsy gestures, emphasizing Marla's contempt for what Jack is doing.

### Epithets

Epithets are disparaging words that aim to degrade or offend someone because of their traits.

**Example 1: "A generation of men raised by women."**

**Analysis:** In this instance, Tyler Durden criticizes the apparent feminization of men in society by using this phrase as a disparaging slur. Tyler implies that males have been shaped or dominated by feminine values or characteristics, which he views as weak or undesirable, by insinuating that men have been raised by women. This epithet is a criticism on conventional gender norms and cultural expectations, as well as Tyler's dissatisfaction with what he sees as the emasculation of modern men.

**Example 2: "I felt sorry for all the guys packing into gyms..."**

**Analysis:** at this particular context, Jack expresses sympathy for men who follow the societal standard of working out at gyms in an attempt to achieve the desired manly figure. Jack suggests that he thought their efforts were pointless or misdirected when he said he "felt sorry" for them. This suggests that they were sacrificing their originality or authenticity to adapt to social norms regarding appearance. Jack's disenchantment with prevailing ideas of masculinity and physical attractiveness is reflected in this term.

**Example 3: "Big reach. Skinny guys fight till they're burger."**

**Analysis:** In essence, Tyler Durden is arguing that it is meaningless to imagine historical characters engaged in fight. He mockingly says that even slim boys would fight until they were utterly destroyed and just served as "burgers," therefore it's a ridiculous idea. Tyler's attitude of not taking conventional or mainstream beliefs seriously is reflected in this. He frequently makes light of society expectations and conventions, and in this instance, he is making fun of the idea that historical characters would fight each other. Tyler uses it as a means of expressing his unique and irreverent viewpoint on the world.

### Vulgarity

Any language that is blunt, unpleasant, or repulsive is considered vulgar.

**Example 1: "Sometimes all you could hear were flat, hard packing sounds..."**

**Analysis:** The phrase "flat, hard packing sounds" refers to the impact of punches during a fight. It's a graphic and vulgar description of physical violence, contributing to the overall tone of brutality in the scene

**Example 2: "The previous occupant had been a bit of a shut-in."**

**Analysis:** This speech can be regarded as subtly obscene even though it doesn't use explicit profanity because it implies social isolation or mental health problems in relation to those who are shut-ins. The term "a bit of a shut-in" has negative connotations and may be seen as disparaging or condemning of those who face psychiatric issues or difficulty interacting with others. This is a reflection of the American cultural norm that prizes extroversion and sociability and frequently stigmatizes people who don't live up to these standards.

**Slang**

Slang is the term for colloquial language or unusual terms or expressions that are frequently unique to a certain community or subculture.

**Example 1: "Changeover" (Jack explains the concept of a "changeover" to the audience while observing Tyler at work in the projectionist room).**

**Analysis:** In the film industry, the process of changing from one film reel to another during a showing is referred to as "changeover." Jack uses the phrase in this context to explain to the audience how movie projectors work and the nuances of film screenings. This use of language reflects a cultural norm that explains specialist or technical terms to a broader audience in order to improve their comprehension of a certain topic or industry.

**Example 2: "Air Mattress" (used to refer to flight attendants)**

**Analysis:** This term refers to flight attendants in an informal and nonstandard manner, which makes it slang. It's a pun that links flight attendants to inflatable mattresses that are usually used for sleeping, implying that their only responsibility is to make passengers comfortable while flying. This usage highlights a cultural norm that occasionally undervalues workers in the service industry, reflecting a casual and possibly dismissive attitude toward flight attendants.

**Taboo**

Words or subjects deemed improper or prohibited by society are included in the category of taboo language.

**Example 1: "She's a piece of work."**

**Analysis:** Tyler refers to Marla as a "piece of work" in a disrespectful way, suggesting that she's challenging or bothersome.

**Example 2: "She's a wild, twisted bitch."**

**Analysis:** Tyler calls Marla a "bitch" to make fun of her and imply that she's ill-mannered or spiteful.

**Blasphemy**

Speaking derogatorily about religious or holy objects is considered blasphemy.

**Example 1: "Fuck damnation. Fuck redemption."**

**Analysis:** Tyler's denial of damnation and redemption calls into question Christian doctrine

**Example 2: "God's unwanted children"**

**Analysis:** Tyler undermines conventional religious beliefs by implying a lack of divine concern or attention.

**Scatology**

Scatological language is when someone makes references to bodily parts or excrement; it's usually employed for comedic or shocking effect.

**Example 1: "A pint of blood before you get sick."**

**Analysis:** Even if blood and illness are not directly associated with scatology, the mention of them can arouse unpleasant and visceral images linked to physiological processes, which can add to feelings of nausea or disgust.

**Euphemisms**

The table given below provides the frequency of types of Euphemisms used in the movie Fight Club 1999

**Table 2**  
**Types of Euphemisms used in the film Fight Club 1999**

Sr. No.	Types of Euphemisms	Frequencies
1	Euphemisms for death and killing	20
2	Euphemisms for political correctness	2
3	Euphemisms for sexuality	13
4	Euphemisms for addressing	6
<b>Total</b>		<b>41</b>

In the film "Fight Club," various types of euphemisms are used to soften or disguise the harshness of certain topics or actions. The most frequently used euphemism type is for death and killing, with a total of 20 instances throughout the movie. These euphemisms serve to cushion the brutality of violence and mortality, reflecting a cultural discomfort with directly addressing these themes. By using euphemisms, the film navigates sensitive subject matter while still conveying its message effectively. Similarly, euphemisms for sexual activity appear 13 times in the movie, indicating a societal tendency to cloak discussions about sex and intimacy in more polite or socially acceptable language.

Additionally, euphemisms for political correctness are used twice in "Fight Club," suggesting an awareness of the importance of language in shaping societal perceptions and maintaining social harmony. These euphemisms may serve to avoid offending or alienating certain groups of people by using less confrontational or stigmatizing language. Furthermore, euphemisms for addressing, with six instances in the film, demonstrate a tendency to soften or personalize interactions by using indirect or gentle language. Overall,

the total of 41 euphemisms used in "Fight Club" underscores the significance of linguistic diplomacy in navigating sensitive topics and maintaining social cohesion.

### **Sample texts from the movie Fight club (1999)**

#### **Euphemisms for death and killing**

Euphemisms are frequently utilized in the script to make the discourse more agreeable or less confronting, softening the grim reality of death and killing.

#### **Example 1: "I'll tell you when I'm floating out of my body."**

**Analysis:** In this instance, Marla describes the experience of dying or having a near-death encounter using a euphemism ("floating out of my body").

#### **Example 2: "You wake up at O'Hare."**

**Analysis:** This euphemism refers to the possibility of dying in a plane crash or other accidents

#### **Euphemisms for political correctness**

#### **Example 1: "It's airline policy not to imply ownership in the event of a dildo."**

**Analysis:** This euphemism stays away from discussing who owns a dildo that was discovered in luggage.

#### **Example 2: "Her lie reflected my lie."**

**Analysis:** Directly calling someone a liar could come across as confrontational or accusing, thus this euphemism helps to avoid doing so. It softens the charge and keeps the conversation civil and diplomatic by portraying it as a mirror of one's own deception.

#### **Euphemisms for sexual activities**

#### **Example 1: "I want to have your abortion."**

**Analysis:** Marla uses a euphemism ("have your abortion") to refer to engaging in sexual activity with Tyler without explicitly stating it.

#### **Euphemisms for addressing**

#### **Example 1: "How's that working out for you?"**

**Analysis:** A more direct inquiry, like "How are you doing?" is substituted with this euphemism.

#### **Example 2: "Surprise me."**

**Analysis:** "Surprise me" is a euphemism used to refer to someone in an ambiguous or oblique manner, implying a challenge or request without making it clear. These euphemisms function to avoid using more explicit language, which can be crucial for upholding social norms and averting conflict in some situations, while nevertheless conveying an air of anger or defiance.

**Conclusion**

To conclude, the analysis of taboo language and euphemisms in "Fight Club" (1999) reveals a rich picture of the social conflicts and cultural environment that characterized late 20th-century America. The findings show that 135 instances of intentional vulgarity, insults, and profanity were used to express themes of resistance and revolt against social norms. At the same time, the use of euphemisms – there are 41 instances in total – reflects a general social unease with confronting touchy subjects head-on, especially when it comes to death, killing, and sex. The movie forces viewers to consider the difficulties of language use in forming cultural identity and negotiating social norms through the deliberate use of taboo words and euphemisms. In the end, the contrast of these language components highlights the movie's examination of individualism and disappointment.

## References

- Allan, K., & Burridge, K. (2006). *Forbidden words: Taboo and the censoring of language*. Cambridge University Press.
- Allen, J. P. B., Corder, S. P., & Davies, A. (Eds.). (1975). *The Edinburgh course in applied linguistics* (Vol. 2). Oxford University Press.
- Babou, M. (2014). A Sociolinguistic Analysis of Use and Perception of Insults: Tlemcen Speech Community. *International Journal of Academic Research and Reflection*, 2(4), 2309-0405..
- Battistella, E. (2005). *Bad language: are some words better than others?*. Oxford University Press.
- Beekman, J., & Callow, J. (1986). *Translating the word of God*. Summer Institute of Linguistics.
- Berger, P., & Luckmann, T. (2016). The social construction of reality. In *Social theory re-wired* (pp. 110-122). Routledge.
- Brenkman, R. (2023). *Afrikaans Taboo Words: Offensiveness Ranking and Reflections in Usage. Theses and Dissertations, Volume 10328(1)*, 123-145.
- Cruse, A. (2006). *Glossary of semantics and pragmatics*. Edinburgh University Press.
- Eble, C. C. (1996). *Slang & sociability: In-group language among college students*. Univ of North Carolina Press.
- Enright, D. J. (1985). Fair of speech: The uses of euphemism.
- Fakuade, G., Kemdirim, N., Nnaji, I., & Nwosu, F. (2013). Linguistic taboos in the Igbo society: A sociolinguistic investigation. *Journal of Language, Discourse & Society*, 2(2), 117-132.
- Foolen, A. (2012). The relevance of emotion for language and linguistics. *Moving ourselves, moving others: Motion and emotion in intersubjectivity, consciousness and language*, 349-369.
- Hassan, A. Y., Hasan, M. A., & Sabti, A. A. (2022). The Use of Taboo Words and Euphemisms in Albasheer Show Program. *International Journal of Early Childhood Special Education*, 14(3).
- Hughes, G. (2006). *An Encyclopedia of Swearing: The Social history of oaths, profanity, foul language, and ethnic slurs in the English-speaking world*. London and New York: M.E. Sharp.
- Jay, T. (1992). *Cursing in america. Cursing in America*, 1-287.
- Jay, T. (2009). The utility and ubiquity of taboo words. *Perspectives on psychological science*, 4(2), 153-161.
- Jay, T., & Janschewitz, K. (2008). *The pragmatics of swearing. Journal of Politeness Research*, 4(2), 267-288.
- Ljung, M. (2010). *Swearing: A cross-cultural linguistic study*. Springer.

- Mercury, R. E. (1995). Swearing: A. *TESL Canada journal*, 13(1), 28-36.
- Nitisari, D., Lestari, I., & Ramadhan, M. R. (2023). THE TYPES AND THE FUNCTIONAL CATEGORIES OF TABOO WORDS IN EUPHORIA SEASON 2 TV SERIES SCRIPTS. *Jurnal Sosial Humaniora dan Pendidikan*, 2(2), 56-62.
- Sadock, J. M. (1993). Figurative speech and linguistics. *Metaphor and thought*, 2, 58-70.
- Sells, M. (1996). The Euphemism. *Department of Religion, Haverford College Journal*, 1(1).
- Sitohang, M., & Mansur, M. (2021). AN ANALYSIS OF TABOO WORDS AND EUPHEMISMS FOUND IN THE CHARACTERS'UTTERANCES IN THE MOVIE ENTITLED "THE PURGE: ELECTION YEAR". *JELL (Journal of English Language and Literature) STIBA-IEC Jakarta*, 6(02), 115-134.
- Trudgill, P. (1975). Sociolinguistics and Scots dialects. *The Scots Language in Education: Association for Scottish Literary Studies. Occasional Papers*, (3), 28-34.
- Wardaugh, R. (2006). An introduction to sociolinguistics. *The British Journal of Sociology*, 57(1), 123-145.
- Warren, B. (1992). What euphemisms tell us about the interpretation of words. *Studia linguistica*, 46(2), 128-172.